GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:759
ANSWERED ON:21.11.2007
ENVIRONMENT DAMAGE CAUSED BY PLASTICS
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Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has assessed the extent of damage caused by plastics to the environment;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action taken or proposed to be taken by the Government in this regard?

Answer

MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA)

(a) to (c) A monograph entitled "Plastics for Environment and Sustainable Development" was published in 2003 by the Indian Centre for Plastics in the Environment, Mumbai and the Central Institute of Plastics Engineering & Technology, Chennai, an autonomous institution of the Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers, which comprehensively assesses issues concerning Sustainability of plastics as materials and their impact on the environment. Plastics are generally chemically inert. However, the indiscriminate littering of plastics and environmentally unsound recycling practices have the potential to cause adverse impacts on environment and health.

The Government of India has notified the Plastic Manufacture, Sale and Usage Rules, 1999 amended 2003 under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. As per these rules, manufacture, stocking, distribution, or selling of carry bags made of virgin or recycled plastic which are less than 20 x 30 cms in size and 20 microns thickness is banned. These rules also prohibit use of recycled plastic bags and containers for storing, carrying, dispensing or packaging of foodstuffs. Further, units manufacturing carry bags or containers made of virgin and recycled plastics are required to register with the concerned State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) or Pollution Control Committee (PCC) prior to the commencement of production.

As per information made available by State Pollution Control Boards, the States like Maharashtra, Punjab, Chandigarh, Kerala, Meghalaya and Goa have laid down stricter norms than prescribed with regard to thickness of plastic bags, viz. 50, 30, 30, 30, 40 and 40 microns respectively. The State of Himachal Pradesh has banned carry bags made of non biodegradable material of thickness less than 70 microns and size less than 18 X 12 inches. The Government of West Bengal has banned the manufacture, use, storage and sale of plastic carry bags of thickness below 40 microns and of size 16 X 12 inches. Further, the States of Gujarat, Orissa and Goa have banned use of plastic bags in certain religious and tourist places like Ambaji, Dakor, Somnath in Gujarat and municipal area of Puri and Konark in Orissa. The concerned State Governments and the Union Territory Administrations are monitoring the implementation.